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Sir Arthur Evans and the Minoan Myth: The Creation of Ancient Cretan Culture

By

Madeleine McCracken

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford, MS

May 2021

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to everyone who guided and encouraged me throughout the year.

Thank you.

ABSTRACT

MADELEINE MCCRACKEN: Sir Arthur Evans and the Creation of the Minoan Myth

This paper explores the excavations conducted in the early 20th century by Sir Arthur Evans at the site of Knossos on the island of Crete. An analysis of Evans' humanitarian and journalistic work in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the late 19th century sets the tone for the paper. I consider Evans' life's work at Knossos to gain a better understanding of the man behind it and both why and how he created a modern image of an ancient culture. I will describe in detail a few key monuments and objects which he excavated and reconstructed. I draw conclusions about how certain aspects of Minoan culture at Knossos have been misinterpreted, or how certain evidence, or lack thereof, was disregarded. The paper ends with an examination of how Evans' national heritage influenced his excavations along with the opinions of local Cretans regarding the site.

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Introduction

You approach the entrance to the Throne Room, the sun beating hot on your back. Looking up, you see four doorways cut into the concrete walls. Entering, you find yourself in a cool, dark space. Once your eyes adjust, you see the elaborate wall fresco, with griffins standing on either side of the western door to the interior of the palace, as if to guard it from unwanted entry, while two more sit on either side of the gypsum throne in the middle of the northern wall. To the south three black pillars with red and white capitals sit atop a step and support the ceiling. On the other side of the pillars there is a skylight looking down into the so-called “Lustral Basin” below. Marvelous to behold, this sight transports the viewer back to the early 1400s BC and the ancient Minoan civilization (refer to Figures VIII and IX). It is this view that I was excited to see in-person last summer for my research, before my plans were ruined by the pandemic.

However, it was almost definitely not the view that ancient Cretans would have beheld when gazing upon the same space. Restored from 1900-1930, this so-called Throne Room is the creation of Sir Arthur Evans. A British scholar with a romantic imagination, Evans was responsible for excavating this site, Knossos, from 1900, when he acquired the land until his death in 1941. Most modern scholars agree that the complex as it stands today does not reflect the reality of the ancient buildings and rooms. For example, the wall painting in the Throne Room is almost certainly made up of bits of frescoes from other areas of the complex, and the room itself was most likely not a throne room at all. In fact, in his early notes Evans referred to it as a “bath room” before he renamed it the “Throne Room.”

It is the purpose of this paper to determine some of the sources of Evans' biases and ideals which he carried into his reconstructions and interpretations of his finds at Knossos. To that end, in Chapter I, I will begin by looking into Evans' childhood to see what influences at a young age could have affected his later work in creating an entire ancient culture. Then I will focus on his time as a humanitarian and journalist in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While there, he kept an extensive travel journal, which gives many insights into his mindset towards other countries, and which also plays into his ideas about Crete. His time in Bosnia not only influenced his relationship with the modern Cretans, but also contributed to his interpretations of his excavations at Knossos and ultimately helped form his conception of Cretan myth and culture. I also discuss the Ottoman empire, and the significance of the fact that Evans chose to spend most of his life working at sites which had just recently been freed from the Ottomans and were in the process of being claimed by Western nations.

After examining Evans' life before Knossos, in Chapter II, I analyze all the steps which led him to Crete, and examine a number of his reconstructions and conceptions of different aspects of ancient Cretan culture, including the so-called Throne Room and the famous Minoan snake goddess. Reminding the reader of relevant parts of Evans' background, I now explore exactly how he created this ancient culture, a question crucial to a complete understanding of why he did it.

In Chapter III, following this analysis of Evans' work, I delve even deeper into the purpose of his reconstructions, highlighting both his personal and nationalist agenda. I then

discuss how his motivation related to the opinions and ideas of the local Cretans concerning the site. A more comprehensive look at the state of Cretan society in the early 1900s shows a conflicted state, a battleground between eastern and western powers. I look at how Evans fits into this landscape, and how his work was ultimately used to claim Crete for the west, though I do not think that was his primary motive for his reconstructions. A romantic at heart, Evans' diaries are filled with elaborate stories about the lives that might have played out at the complex of Knossos, and do not often discuss the western political agenda. The purpose of the following pages is to provide insight into the person of Arthur Evans, and to examine both how and why he created a modern image of an ancient civilization.

Chapter I: The Origin Story of An Archaeologist: Early Life and Humanitarianism in Bosnia

Evans's Early Life

Sir Arthur Evans (Figure I) was born in England in 1851, the son of British businessman Sir John Evans. John Evans was not only a successful businessman in the paper industry, but he was also an amateur archaeologist, so Arthur grew up surrounded by ancient coins and weapons from Bronze Age England.¹ Arthur's mother died when he was only six years old, an experience which devastated the boy and left a lasting trauma. The impact of his father's hobby on Arthur was considerable, and fascinated by archaeology and with a lust for travel and adventure, Evans refused to take over the paper mill from his father, instead choosing to study modern history at Oxford.²

As a child Evans had a vivid imagination, an attribute which he would employ excessively in his future career. His father noted a particular instance of the imagination of his eight-year-old son in a letter to his fiancé.³ He recounted a time when the young Evans had buried in their garden a china doll with its legs broken along with a butterfly and the doll's personal effects, presumably to carry with him into the afterlife. He placed an inscription in the

¹ Hood 2004, p. 558.

² Evans 1950, p. 135. Ms. Evans was Arthur Evans' half-sister and a historian who wrote a short biography on her late brother.

³ Marinatos 2015.

garden reading “KING EDWARD SIXTH⁴ and the butterfly and there [sic] coths and things.”

His father relates these actions as very peculiar and denoting his son’s developed psychological understanding of death.⁵ The metaphysical musings of this little boy provide a perfect preface to his future, much larger creation of an ancient culture which also involved a mix of scientific analysis and romantic imagination. As we continue to discuss Evans’ life, it is important to keep in mind his character from a young age: an enthusiastic and curious explorer of both the physical and metaphysical, who both asked and answered for himself some of life’s biggest questions.

Figure I: Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos⁶



⁴ Died 1553.

⁵ Marinatos 2015, p. 24. I personally think that the little boy’s relationship with death was greatly influenced by his mother’s untimely passing, which led this already introspective child to think about death and life after death more than the average child.

⁶ One of the most famous photographs of Evans examining Minoan vases at Knossos. Frontmatter of MacGillivray’s *Minotaur*.

Arthur Evans graduated from Oxford in 1874, and the very next year he set out with his younger brother Lewis on a tour of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷ At the time of the brothers' trip, most of eastern Europe was still ruled by the Ottoman Empire, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is separated from Italy by Dalmatia and the Adriatic Sea (Figure II).⁸

Figure II: Map of Eastern Europe in 1878



Evans documented this tour in great detail in his book *Through Bosnia and Herzegovina on Foot during the Insurrection*, first published in 1877. He explains that the brothers did not intend to travel during the Slavic nationalist insurrection, but that their journey was due to their

⁷ Giannakopoulos 2020, p. 604.

⁸ Map from *An Historical Atlas* by Robert H. Ladberron, E. Elaxton and Co., 1884. Accessed through University of Texas Library.

curiosity to see the peoples still under Ottoman rule as well as the desire to explore the relationship between modern 19th-century Bosnia and its ancient past.⁹

The Ottomans were Turkish Muslims who ruled over a vast empire from 1300-1922.¹⁰ Greece had liberated itself from them by early in the 1820s.¹¹ By the late 19th century the Ottoman Empire was in decline, and in the aftermath of World War II it completely dissolved.¹² The Ottoman Empire spanned parts of both Europe and Asia as well as northern Africa, which makes it hard to define culturally.¹³ A mix of both eastern and western religion and tradition defined the culture of the empire.¹⁴ It is also difficult to pinpoint the national identity of the Ottoman Empire because it and the world around it changed so much over the course of six hundred years. Both Muslim and Christian, eastern and western, this Anatolian empire has often been oversimplified as an eastern power. Evans and western, Christian civilization as a whole believed it to be such, especially as the Muslim Ottoman Empire was competing with these far western European nations for control of eastern Europe.

Evans had previously visited the small Turkish-Austrian town of Costainica, which had captivated him and, as his sister Joan Evans wrote in an article about her late brother's life, "thereafter he set the Balkans before any part of the world in his affections."¹⁵ Inspired by his

⁹ Evans 1877, p. ix.

¹⁰ Mikhail and Philliou 2012, 7p. 23.

¹¹ Heraclides and Dialla 2015, p. 105.

¹² Mikhail and Philliou 2012, p. 723.

¹³ Ergul 2012, p. 629.

¹⁴ Ergul 2012, p. 630. One example of western tradition in the Ottoman empire is the word *Rum*, which referred to the Greek and Orthodox people in the empire. *Rum* is derived from the word Roman.

¹⁵ Evans 1950, p. 136.

previous visit to the area and his desire to learn more about the Slavic past and present, Evans set out on the 1875 trip which would bring him into the public eye. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine Evans' early travels in eastern Europe in order to point out how they contributed to his interpretations of his later excavations at Knossos and ultimately helped form his conception of Cretan myth and culture.

Textual Similarities: From Bosnia to Crete

I begin with the introduction of Evans' book *Through Bosnia and Herzegovina on Foot during the Insurrection*. Here he lays out his purpose in writing this book and sets forth that its main goal is to "open people's eyes to the evils of the government under which the Bosnians suffer."¹⁶ This evil government to which Evans refers is the Muslim Ottoman regime which at the time ruled over not only a great part of mainland eastern Europe but also the island of Crete. In order to expose the injustices of the Ottoman Empire over the Bosnians, Evans begins with a detailed history lesson which legitimizes the Slavic claim to the land in eastern Europe and pleads with the British public to support the Slavs' nationalistic rebellion.¹⁷ Evans compares the people of Bosnia with the English, saying that the two countries share "a common national character...not prone to revolution."¹⁸ The Bosnians are not easily roused to revolt, and Evans maintains that this nation would thrive under a parliamentary government like that of the British. This argument for sympathy from Britain based on shared traits between the two nations was

¹⁶ Evans 1877, p. x.

¹⁷ This history lesson lasts nearly 100 pages, which shows how important Evans thought the history of the region was to the legitimacy of the Slavic quest for freedom; Evans 1877, pp. xxiii-civ.

¹⁸ Evans 1877, p. ci.

intentional; his readers back home would surely be more inclined to support the Bosnian nationalist movement if they viewed the people as kindred rather than a foreign, far-off race. Evans received a great deal of attention and praise from the public for his writings on the Bosnian and Herzegovinian insurrections, especially from the British Liberals.¹⁹ This book set the tone for all of Evans's future work, both political and archaeological.

Later, Evans employed similar logic to pique the interest of the English in his writings on Knossos, in which he often drew comparisons between the ancient Cretans and modern British. By framing his ancient finds in a modern context, he gained global support and interest for his work in Knossos.²⁰ Evans found himself in a unique position to reframe his finds, as he was reconstructing a site that had been lost to humanity for millennia. Unlike other monuments whose ruins survived the centuries, the palace at Knossos had been largely destroyed, giving Evans the freedom to rebuild it in a way that was as much “a tribute to Art Nouveau and Art Deco sensitivities as it is to anything pre-1900.”²¹ Here Evans used a similar tactic—both modernizing and westernizing the ancient Cretan ruins—to draw in his audience. However, in this case Evans did not point out similarities to gain sympathy for a cause, as he did in Bosnia, but rather he created an ancient culture similar to that of modern England in order to provide a grand prehistoric predecessor for his own ethnic group.²² Evans draws significant parallels between other cultures and his own to support his views.

¹⁹ Gere 2009, p. 57.

²⁰ Papadopoulos, 2005, p. 124.

²¹ Papadopoulos 2005, pp. 90-91.

²² One example which will be discussed later is the similarity between Evans' team's reconstructions of ancient Knossian women's clothing and late Victorian English women's fashion.

Another key aspect of all Evans' writings is their incredibly thorough nature. He never seemed to forget a detail, naming the flora and fauna he encountered on his Bosnian adventures and describing the clothing worn by the Slavic peasantry and the countryside in which they lived in great detail.²³ As we have seen, he also wrote extensively about the history of Bosnia.²⁴ His meticulous style is also present in his later work on his archaeological finds at Knossos. He wrote a total of six volumes detailing his work at Knossos, and each one contains a meticulous description of his finds and an outline of his thought processes in both his reconstruction of certain parts of the palace and his relation of Crete to other ancient civilizations (more on this topic later). By writing about his archaeological finds at Crete with the same thoroughness he applied to his travel journals, Evans helped revolutionize archaeology by creating a thorough record of his excavation at Knossos.

A third similarity between Evans' writings on Bosnia and his later work on Crete is his use of elaborate imagery to interest his readers. A prime example of this imagery is a description in his Bosnian study which brings to mind a similarly eloquent passage from his later work on Knossos.²⁵ The former is a description of Crni Vrch ("Black Mountain"), a Bosnian mountain over which Evans and his brother travelled during their peripatetic adventures. Evans depicts the scenery in a classical way:

"The beeches amongst which we now steered our course, by a meandering forest-path, were no longer gnarled and stumpy, but tall and queenly, as those of an English park. Amongst them, here and there, towered isolated oaks, champions as it seemed of a lost fight, tough rugged old barbarians, battling every inch with those civilised victorious beeches—hemmed round but unyielding—heroic, taking every attitude of god like struggle—here a manly, muscular Laocoon,

²³ Gere 2009, p. 59.

²⁴ Evans, 1877, pp. xxiii-civ.

²⁵ quoted by Gere (Gere 2009, p. 59).

wrestling with serpentine brambles and underwood, that insinuates itself among the knotted limbs—a mighty Hercules, uplifted arm and club as to fell the hundred-headed Hydra — or there sovereign Jove, the Thunderer himself, hurling - So the jagged branches interpreted themselves — forked lightning at the beechlings round! But in vain. The oaks must be content to reign in plain and valley. On these uplands the beeches camp triumphantly, til higher still the pines repulse them from the mountain citadel, and in the great struggle for existence each tree finds its own level.”²⁶

Almost more poetry than prose, this description of the mountain seems to jump off the page and transport the reader to the Bosnian countryside. Evans’ education is showcased not only in his delightful descriptions and personifications of the trees on the mountainside, but in the way he chooses to personify them. True to the previously discussed theme, Evans compares the beeches to those of an English park, once again relating a completely foreign place to his home. Not only are the peoples of Bosnia similar to the British, but so is the scenery, which would create more sympathy for the Bosnian plight in the mind of the English reader. Evans also makes several classical allusions in the above passages, relating the struggle for supremacy among the trees to the battle between Laocoon and the serpents, Hercules and the Hydra, and Jove hurling lightning at an enemy, here the enemies are the beechlings, and Jove the mighty oaks. These references serve a greater purpose in the narrative than simply to enhance Evans’ description. By relating the scenery to western stories, Evans associates the very land of Bosnia with the west rather than the east, which currently rules it. Just as Evans previously compared the people with the British, one of the great western empires at the time, he now compares the land with the great western empire of the past. This passage poetically emphasizes his anti-Ottoman leanings, and in an erudite manner he urges his readers to understand and undertake the effort for Bosnian liberty from the eastern Ottoman Empire.

²⁶ Evans 1877, p. 127.

Evans uses similar imagery in his later work *The Palace of Minos at Knossos* which both captivates the reader and draws on western influences. When describing the western entrance to the palace, he references the Sea Gate, a grand entrance which would have made a lasting impression on “the Achaean Vikings who first penetrated to that site through that haven—it offered the first glimpse of the mighty pile reared as their central residency by the Minoan Priest-Kings. Immediately backed as it was by the ancient Keep that had formed the original nucleus of the whole edifice, this entrance system never to the last lost its character of a fortified approach.”²⁷ Here Evans creates a scene from rubble, engaging his readers with an imaginary account, just as he created a mythological scene from the trees on Crni Vrch.

This account is multifaceted. He refers to the Mycenaeans, early Greeks from the mainland, as “Achaean Vikings.” By the 1930s, when Evans wrote this account, it was evident that the Mycenaeans had invaded Crete and Knossos ca 1450 BC. Evans uses the Homeric term for Greeks, Achaean, and pairs with it a reference to the Scandinavian Vikings who were also popularly seen as barbaric invaders. In the former account of the Bosnian countryside, Evans contrasts the civilized Slavic trees with the uncontrolled Ottoman ones. In his much later consideration of the western entrance to the palace of Knossos, Evans contrasts Minoan culture and civilization with Mycenaean occupation. It is clear that these techniques which Evans used in his early writings about the eastern European countries’ struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire are also employed in his later works at Crete. It is important to view Evans’s work at Crete not as a project completely separate from his earlier experience in Bosnia, but rather as a logical continuation of his pre-established political and archaeological agendas.

²⁷ Evans 1935, p. 7.

The Race Issue

While Evans clearly viewed both Bosnia and Crete through a western lens, his views on race are far less clear. Evans seems to contradict himself many times about the issue of what he terms race, which now we would probably consider ethnicity. Solely in light of the information discussed above—Evans’s favorable comparison of the Bosnians to the British, his fervent cries for their freedom from the Ottoman regime—one would expect that the man would consider the two races equal.

Before continuing to dissect further Evans’ paradoxical view of eastern Europeans, we must consider his use of the word “race,” which differs from its modern usage. The difference between eastern and western Europeans is not one of race, but of ethnicity; Evans himself admits that the South-Slavonic people are “among the barbarous members of our Aryan family generally.”²⁸ In this statement, Evans places all Europeans in the same racial group, and thus our modern understanding of the difference between eastern and western Europeans would be ethnic rather than racial. Although these two groupings differ in that the former refers to differences in cultural expression while the latter denotes genetic differences, they are both a construct within which we group people, and both constructs have been used to point to the superiority of one race or ethnic group. Thus, although Evans’ use of the word “race” would be replaced in modern writings by “ethnic group,” the language he uses to enforce the superiority of his ethnic group does not differ greatly from an argument for racial superiority. In the following paragraphs I will

²⁸ Evans 1877, p. 296.

use the terms interchangeably, as Evans does, so that we may gain a better understanding of race as he sees it.

Perhaps the fact that Evans views the Slavic peoples as part of his own Aryan race allows him to denote them as “inferior” without expressing a desire to rule over them. Evans even had a name for this ethnic group of the Aryan race; he referred to them as Illyrians. This name comes from Illyricum, the ancient Roman province that once occupied much of the space that is now eastern Europe.²⁹ Evans rephrases what his contemporaries referred to as the “Eastern Question”—whether the Ottoman Empire should rule over eastern Europe—as the “Illyrian question,” under which he argues that as a unique ethnic group with their own cultures inherited from their Roman ancestors, the eastern European countries rightfully should be liberated from Ottoman control.³⁰ This Illyrian race is culturally distinct from the Ottomans, and therefore should be associated with the west rather than the east.

Despite his assertions in favor of Bosnian liberation, Evans assumes a discriminatory attitude, regarding the Slavic people as lesser yet fascinating individuals.³¹ His descriptions of the people in Bosnia do not differ greatly from his descriptions of the flora and fauna. He seems to regard the inhabitants of the land as specimens for observation, using that very word to describe one Bosnian boy whom he considers a “good specimen of the untutored savage as he

²⁹ Giannakopoulos 2020, p. 608; Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and coastal Croatia compose ancient Illyricum.

³⁰ Giannakopoulos 2020, p.608.

³¹ Evans 1877, p. 312

exists in Bosnia at the present day.”³² The culmination of Evans’s discriminatory attitudes is displayed in the following passage:

“In these Illyrian lands I have often been addressed as ‘brat,’ or brother, and the Bosniacs are known to call the stranger ‘shija’-neighbour. I, who write this, happen individually not to appreciate this ‘*égalitaire*’ spirit. I don’t choose to be told by every barbarian I meet that he is a man and a brother. I believe in the existence of inferior races, and would like to see them exterminated.”³³

This passage taken on its own is blatantly racist; it is hard to reconcile this man with the person who fought so fervently for the freedom of these very people, whom he believes should be exterminated. While in Bosnia, Evans not only wrote about the people, clothing, lifestyle, and scenery, but he was also always eager to help them. On a later stay in Ragusa³⁴ in 1878, he not only took part in a relief mission for refugees, but paid for schooling for a Herzegovinian orphan and gave dinner to a blind beggar woman daily.³⁵ Such kind acts toward the Bosnians and Herzegovinians become confusing when he refers to the same people as “barbarians” who ought to be “exterminated.” The above passage is even further complicated by the text surrounding it.

Only sentences before, Evans admits that while he dislikes the familiar ways of the Bosnians, it is “part and parcel of a democratic habit of mind common to the whole Serbian, and indeed the whole South-Slavonic, race.”³⁶ Here Evans acknowledges what he considers the less advanced social structure of the Serbians, while at the same time praising this very trait of

³² Quoted by Gere (Gere 2009, p. 60).

³³ Evans 1877, p. 312, quoted by both Gere and Giannakopoulos.

³⁴ Modern day Dubrovnik, located in Croatia, at the time of Evans’s visit Ragusa was under Austrian rule (Hood 2000, p. 558).

³⁵ Gere 2009, p. 62.

³⁶ Evans 1877, pp. 311-312.

familiarity as a mark of democracy. Evans' ideas about race relations are quite paradoxical, and thus it is difficult to simply declare him a racist as some would, and yet his remarks about the inferiority of the Serbians contradict the idea of him as a wholehearted proponent of Slavic nationalism.³⁷ Rather, it appears that he falls somewhere in the middle; he sympathizes with the Serbian plight, but more as a wise grandfather assisting a struggling child than as an equal fighting alongside equals. This analogy carries further when taken with the sentences following his "extermination statement." Evans then admits that these are his own personal biases:

"It is easy to see how valuable such a spirit of democracy may be amongst people whose self-respect has been degraded by centuries of oppression, and who in many respects are only too prone to cower beneath the despot's rod: for one need not be enamoured of liberty coupled with equality and fraternity not to perceive that, when the choice lies between it and tyranny, freedom, even in such companionship, is to be infinitely preferred; and a man must be either blind or a diplomatist not to perceive that in the Slavonic provinces of Turkey the choice ultimately lies between despotism and a democracy almost socialistic."³⁸

Here Evans sympathizes with the Slavic plight, and refers to the very "égalitaire spirit" which he dislikes as evidence of the people's democratic nature. The paradoxical state of Evans' claims makes it difficult to ascertain his true motives in his writings and his views on the Bosnian people. His praises are tempered with comments about Slavic inferiority, while his more racist remarks still lead him to the conclusion that these people should be freed from the Ottoman (Muslim) yoke to govern themselves. Some of his harsher critics believe that his blatantly racist comments overshadow all else. They see him as a "racist who regarded minorities (whether modern or ancient) with contempt."³⁹ Others hold that his political commitments to help the Slavic people attain independence outweigh his racist statements; as the saying goes

³⁷ Giannakopoulos 2020, p. 610.

³⁸ Evans 1877, p. 312.

³⁹ McEnroe 2002, p. 69.

actions speak louder than words.⁴⁰ While it would be impossible to settle this debate once and for all, as Evans himself said much to support either side, this complicated view of eastern European races carries over into his dealings with the Cretans and thus is crucial to this discussion.

While Chapter III will deal with Evans' relationship with the Cretans in greater detail, it is also important to mention it briefly here as it was certainly influenced by the same paradoxical ideas which Evans expressed about Bosnia. Crete was also under Ottoman control, and was only freed in 1897, just before Evans began working there. A few years later in 1913 the island officially unified with Greece. Crete, much like Bosnia, was considered a political battlefield between the east and the west; there Christianity and Islam clashed, and with the ruling political power ousted, it was a crucial point in the fight for dominance over eastern Europe.⁴¹ Similar to his earlier reports on Bosnia, Evans also westernized his findings. By creating an ancient culture similar to modern day Europe, he ideologically claimed Crete for the west. Evans' interaction with the Cretans he encountered was at least in part driven by his western biases and his plan to westernize the island's history.

⁴⁰ Gere 2009, p. 61.

⁴¹ Hamilakis 2006, pp.147-148.

Chapter II: Knossos: Excavation and Westernization

The Road to Knossos

This chapter will analyze the details of Sir Arthur Evans' work at Knossos. We will begin by exploring the events in his life which led him to Knossos, the site of the legendary King Minos and the labyrinth. The ostensible reason for which Evans began his excavations was his desire to discover an early Mediterranean language which he believed he had found written on some seal-stones he had acquired as Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum.⁴² However, there are a number of smaller causes behind this overarching reason for excavation. In 1883, the year before he was appointed Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, Evans visited Heinrich Schliemann in his residence in Athens.⁴³ Schliemann was a renowned archaeologist of the time, famous for his exploration of some sites that Homer mentioned in the *Iliad*, including Troy itself, and the Greek citadel of Mycenae on the mainland. This visit to Schliemann and opportunity to view his Mycenaean treasures greatly influenced Evans. He wrote an article praising Schliemann's work at Mycenae, which is one of the earliest connections between Evans and Aegean prehistory.⁴⁴ Though it was nearly a decade later when Evans made any mention of Crete, it was this meeting with Schliemann which set him on the road to Knossos.

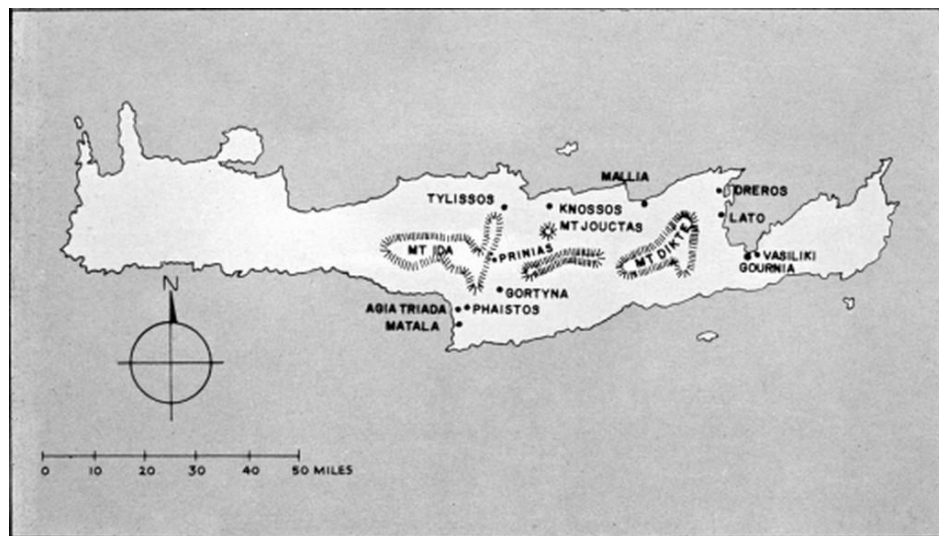
⁴² Schoep 2018, p. 10.

⁴³ Galanakis 2014, p. 86.

⁴⁴ Evans 1883.

In 1891, on behalf of the Ashmolean Museum, Evans obtained a number of Aegean artifacts, known as the Kissamos Group, which were purported to have been found in a cave on Crete.⁴⁵ Crete is an island south of the Cyclades Islands between the Greek mainland and Asia Minor. Kissamos is on the northwest side of the island. Dating from the early Iron Age, these items originated at the site of Kissamos. The Kissamos group appears to have been the spark that lit the flame of Evans' interest in Crete. It led him to investigate more antiquities from Crete, which would ultimately lead him to his lifelong excavation on the island at the site of Knossos, which is located on the north central coast of the island (Figure III).

Figure III: Map of Crete⁴⁶



⁴⁵ Ashmolean Register, 1891. Accessed via Galanakis 2014, p. 86.

⁴⁶ Map of Crete from Brynn Marr College, accessed via JSTOR.

His interest piqued, Evans set out to meet with the Italian archaeologist Federico Halbherr, who had previously explored the island of Crete and could tell Evans more about the source of these artifacts than any other western European. The two men's first meeting would be the start of a lifelong friendship, and, as Joan Evans records, both "fired [Arthur Evans'] imagination and confirmed his interest, though as yet his purpose was hardly formed."⁴⁷ Halbherr described Crete as a land with an unexplored and rich history, just waiting for someone to come along and dig it up.⁴⁸ He greatly influenced Evans' career. A romantic as well as a scholar, Evans could hardly resist looking deeper into the opportunity to work on such a mysterious, ancient site.

The A.J. Evans archive at the Ashmolean museum contains a manuscript draft by Evans, dated 1892, titled "Origins and Affinities of Mycenaean Culture."⁴⁹ This unpublished manuscript shows that his interest in finding an origin for Mycenaean, that is mainland prehistoric, culture dates to at least as early as 1892, and could very likely be the result of his meeting both Schliemann and Halbherr. His work at Crete seems almost a combination of the work of the two men, providing a link between the ancient Crete of which Halbherr spoke and the mainland Mycenaean civilization discovered by Schliemann. The manuscript makes no mention of a search for pre-Mycenaean writing, but it does employ a similar tactic which Evans used in his earlier work in the Baltic states: he denies the possibility that the ancient Mycenaean civilization could have come from an eastern source but rather must have come from the west.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Evans 1943, p. 300.

⁴⁸ Galanakis 2014, p. 87.

⁴⁹ Galanakis 2014, p. 87.

⁵⁰ Galanakis 2014, p. 87.

He cites the Mycenaean artistic style, which he claims is distinct from that of ancient eastern civilizations, as well as the lack of cuneiform writing, which was used in more eastern regions such as Mesopotamia, for example, as evidence of a lack of connection between Mycenae and eastern empires. Though both unpublished and heavily influenced by earlier writers on the same subject, this manuscript is an invaluable source on the progression of Evans' career towards his work at Knossos, as it demonstrates an important step in his thought process and his insistence on a western origin for the Mycenaean and, ultimately, Minoan civilizations. This rehashing of other scholars' work would soon lead him to his own big discovery.

This discovery came in the form of Cretan sealstones with inscriptions. While serving as Keeper of the Ashmolean, Evans received a set of seals, in which he took interest, due to his experience growing up with a father who would collect and analyze small artifacts.⁵¹ According to Gere these seals were “tiny translucent objects made of semi-precious stone, engraved with symbols and scenes of astonishing complexity and aesthetic perfection.”⁵² Evans obtained these sealstones for the Ashmolean Museum from a man who had travelled to bazaars around Greece and the Middle East collecting them.⁵³ Evans then began to investigate their provenance. He read in Arthur Milchhofer's *The Beginnings of Art* that the source of these objects was Crete. He had previously noticed that some of these seals depicted unknown symbols, which he believed could have possibly been an indication of an undiscovered ancient language.

⁵¹ Gere 2009, p. 64.

⁵² Gere 2009, p.64.

⁵³ Gere 2009, p. 64.

Once he realized that the origin of these objects was Crete, he began to toy with the idea of Crete as the western predecessor to Mycenae. In 1893 Evans acquired his first personal sealstone, and the next year he announced that he believed Crete to be both the cultural and linguistic predecessor of Mycenae. Finally, Evans was able to add new and exciting information to the body of work about the ancient Aegean that had fascinated him so greatly. Shortly after he made this announcement, Evans visited Knossos for the first time, while Crete was still under Ottoman rule. While in Crete he acquired for himself a three-sided prismatic sealstone. This carved gem was similar to those he had already seen, both in shape and size as well as text. Noting the similarity of text or “hieroglyphs” as Evans called them, between the sealstones the Ashmolean Museum possessed and the one Evans had found, he was determined to work at Crete, and to uncover the ancient civilization he was certain had produced this ancient written language. The image below (Figure IV) depicts one of the sealstones from Evans’ personal collection. These small seals first inspired him to look into Aegean archaeology, which in turn led to his life’s work at Knossos.

Figure IV: Cretan Sealstone from Late Minoan Period (ca.1700-1090BC)⁵⁴



An aspect of Evans' fascination with Crete which bears restating here is its relation with the Ottoman Empire. As a man who had previously spent a great deal of time protesting and acting against the Ottoman rule in Europe, it is hard to believe that part of Evans's interest in Crete did not stem from its rebellion against the Ottomans. Crete gained its independence from them in 1897, and when Evans first visited in the mid 1890s, just before liberation, the country was being torn apart by Christian and Muslim factions.⁵⁵ This unrest, similar to what he had experienced in Bosnia, must have given Evans a political interest in Crete as well as an archaeological one. All of his interests focused on Crete, and in 1894 Evans decided to buy the land around the site of Knossos, a decision which introduced the focus of the rest of his life.

Excavation and Westernization

The process by which Evans obtained the land necessary for his excavation was long and arduous. Just two days after he first stepped foot at Knossos in March of 1894, he was

⁵⁴ Price 2017, p. 21. This sealstone depicts bulls with a human figure. Made of banded agate. Currently in the Ashmolean Museum, originally from Evans' personal collection of sealstones.

⁵⁵ Carabott 2006, p. 43.

determined that he must own it. The land, known locally as Kephala, was split between two proprietors, but only one, who possessed a quarter of the area Evans sought, was willing to sell.⁵⁶ The other portion of the land, however, was owned by a Turkish family who would not part with it, and Evans was not able to obtain the land until 1900.⁵⁷ The messy legal battle between Evans and the family continued for six years, complicated by the death of the Turkish owner and inheritance of the land by his children. Evans attempted to force the sale of the land since the underage children could not own land, and there were “hidden antiquities” involved, which were against the law.⁵⁸ It was not until 1899, when Prince George of Greece came to Crete to help create a constitution for the Cretans that Evans finally had the legal precedent to acquire the land. Article 3 of the Cretan Constitution stated that “ancient buildings on private land belong to the Cretan state” and that the owners of the land must turn them over for compensation.⁵⁹ Finally, on 18 February 1900, Evans acquired the remaining three quarters of Kephala for only 200£, 35£ less than he had paid for the first quarter he obtained, in the name of the Hellenistic Society and the London Committee of the British School of Athens.⁶⁰

On March 23, 1900, just over a month after he bought the land, Evans began his excavation and within the year he announced that he had uncovered the royal palace of the mythological King Minos of Crete, who had ruled over a great island kingdom and

⁵⁶ Panagiotaki 2004, p. 514. Schliemann had previously attempted to purchase the same land and was also only able to purchase a quarter. When he found that he could not excavate without owning the rest of the land, he gave up on Kephala, whereas Evans entered into a six year legal battle, determined that he would excavate the site.

⁵⁷ Panagiotaki 2004, p. 513.

⁵⁸ Panagiotaki 2004, p. 517. The mother of the family bought the land from her children and successfully prevented this forced sale.

⁵⁹ Panagiotaki 2004, p. 521.

⁶⁰ Panagiotaki 2004, p. 521-522.

commissioned Daedalus to build the famous labyrinth to contain the monstrous bull-headed Minotaur.⁶¹ These ancient stories were famous throughout Western civilization, and when Evans claimed that he had uncovered the location associated with the myth, he gained international recognition.⁶² When Schliemann had thought about excavating Knossos, he postulated that it would only take about a week with a hundred men to excavate the site; Evans dedicated the last forty years of his life to his work at Knossos, and employed up to three hundred workmen at one time.⁶³

Ultimately, Evans would uncover a complex extending about 13,000 square meters, which reached the peak of its splendor in the 16th-15th century BC.⁶⁴ He found a complex series of rooms on several levels built around a central open courtyard.⁶⁵ Figure V is a plan of the complex at Knossos with a legend showing important locations as recognized and named by Evans.

⁶¹ Price 2017, p.17. In the introduction by Rachel Herschman.

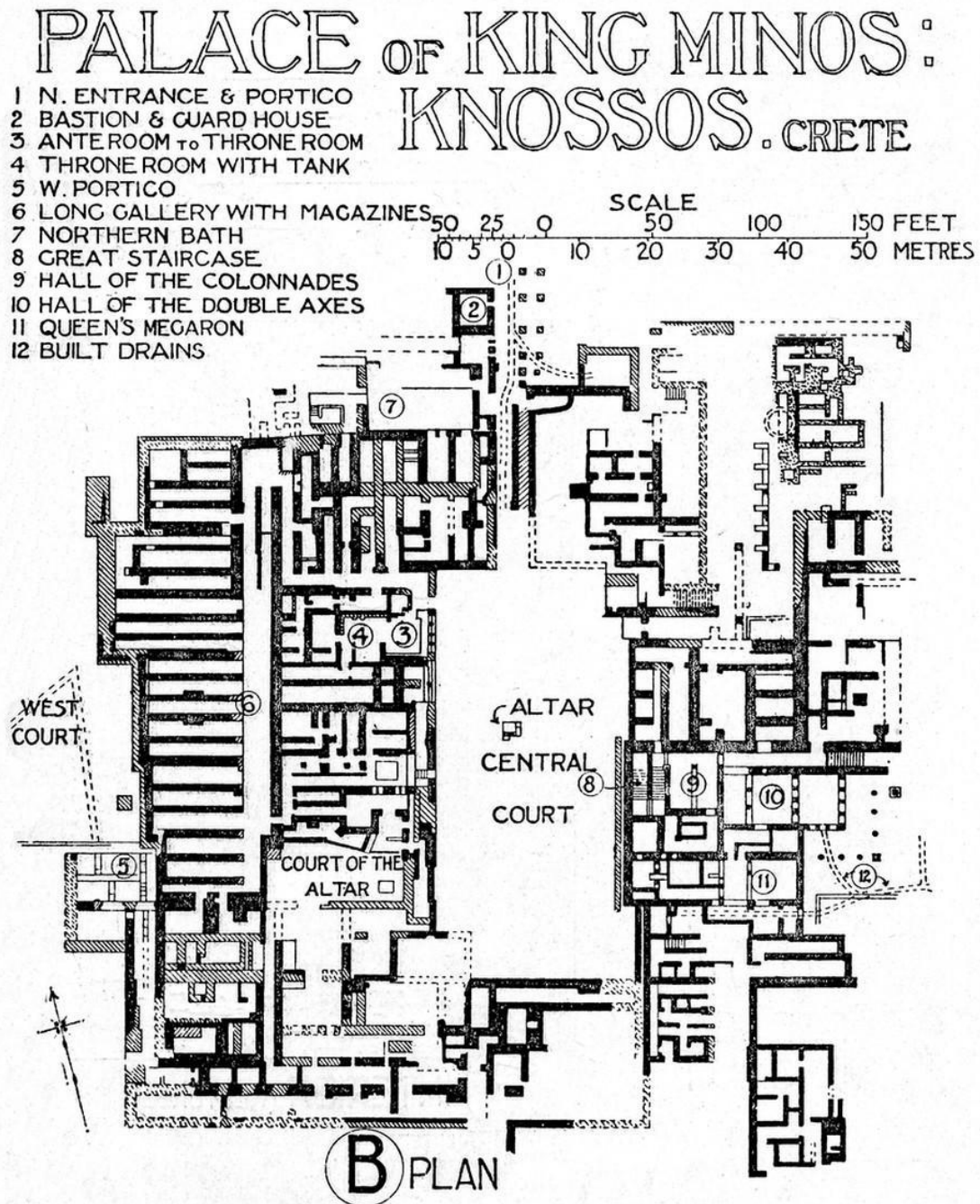
⁶² Papadopoulos 2005, p. 125. Papadopoulos includes pieces from several different newspapers which give glowing reports of Evans' excavation and restoration, demonstrating how well known his work was.

⁶³ Lapatin 2017, p. 61. In Price's *Restoring the Minoans*.

⁶⁴ D'Agata 2010, p. 57.

⁶⁵ D'Agata 2010, p. 57 and Begg 2020, p. 158. There are other structures of the same design across Crete which many scholars also refer to as "palaces;" Begg remarks that in layout they are more similar to medieval monarchies which also consist of repetitive plans around a central court; Preziosi and Hitchcock 1999, 242.

Figure V: Plan of Knossos⁶⁶



⁶⁶ Fletcher 1921, p. 69b.

When Evans found it, the complex was buried several stories deep, and so he set about uncovering and restoring it, though his methods were a bit unconventional.⁶⁷ The fact that he referred to the people who built this installation as ‘Minoan’ has created controversy today, as the name comes not from any historical record, but was Evans’s appropriation from the name of King Minos himself.⁶⁸ However, although he misled people to believe so for many years, Evans was not the first to refer to the ancient Cretans as Minoan, nor was he the first to associate Knossos with the tale of the Labyrinth. He seems to have stolen the term Minoan from the German classicist Karl Hoeck who published a volume in 1828 entitled *Das Minoische Kreta*, in which he refers to a “Minoische periode,” or Minoan period.⁶⁹ Evans did not give Hoeck any credit for the name Minoan, but rather when he announced that he had found the Minoan civilization, he acted as if he had come to the realization on his own that the ancient Cretan civilization was that of King Minos.

The term had also been used by Knossos’ first excavator, Minos Kalokairinos, to describe the site. From a well-to-do family and brother of the British vice consul in Crete, he carried out a few excavations from 1878-1879 on the land he owned at Kephala.⁷⁰ In that time he unearthed a great number of clay *pithoi*, large storage vessels, and archaeological remains which Evans later identified as the western storerooms of the Bronze Age building. Upon discovering this structure, Kalokairinos dubbed the site “the royal palace of King Minos,” a declaration which

⁶⁷ Begg 2020, p. 158.

⁶⁸ Papadopoulos 2005, p. 88.

⁶⁹ Schoep 2018, p. 6.

⁷⁰ Kotsonas 2016, p. 299.

Evans would make just over ten years later as if he were the first to apply the name to the site.⁷¹

It is impossible to know his reasons for stealing Kalokairinos and Hoeck's term; perhaps he wanted to compete with Schliemann, who always associated a myth with the site at which he was currently working, or perhaps he knew that if people thought this was the civilization of a widely popular mythical king his work would gain much more popularity. Perhaps it was simply his overactive imagination at work. Whatever the reason, Evans popularized the ruins of Knossos as a Minoan Palace, and gained worldwide recognition for his find.

Another interesting question about the site at Knossos is when it was first referred to as the home of King Minos. From the Classical age the ruins of Knossos appear to have been called a labyrinth, which may be due not only to the winding series of rooms but also because they contained many images of a double-headed axe or *labrys* in the Anatolian language Carian, which makes up the first part of the Greek word *labyrinthos*.⁷² It is from this ancient term that we get the word labyrinth, and so in the context of Knossos, we might understand it as the maze at the center of which the Minotaur was kept. However, breaking down the word into its etymological roots, it literally translates to "the place of the double-headed axe."⁷³ The word *labyrinthos* is thus an accurate descriptor of the ancient site of Knossos, as the imagery of the double-headed axe abounds there. In the Greek application of the word *labyrinthos* to Knossos, we understand both the connection of the myth of Minos to the site, and an acknowledgement of the *labrys* imagery present there.

⁷¹ D'Agata 2010, p. 65

⁷² Begg 2020, p. 159.

⁷³ Begg, 2020, pp. 158-159. *Labrys* means double-headed axe, while the syllable *-inth* is from Asia Minor and means place, which the Greeks adopted and used in some city names, such as Corinth.

Pliny the Elder refers to Daedalus's labyrinth on the island of Crete, so as early as 77 AD the Mediterranean people associated Crete with the labyrinth and Minos.⁷⁴ This association was not lost over time either. Much later, in the mid-15th century AD, Spanish writer Pero Tafur was the first modern author to refer to the site of Knossos in his discussion of Candia, Crete (modern Heraklion). He states that "three miles away is that labyrinth, made by Daedalus, with many other antiquities."⁷⁵ So both in his use of the name Minoan and attribution of the ancient complex to King Minos, Evans was appropriating the work of other scholars and the knowledge of the local people about the ancient history of their island. It is important to establish these facts before delving into Evans's reconstructions at Knossos (or reconstitutions as he called them), since his work on the site from 1900-1935 was heavily influenced by his perception of the site as Minoan and his understanding of the word Minoan, which clearly was not merely his own invention.

Evans also developed a timeline of Minoan civilization based on pottery styles and stratigraphical evidence. He divided Minoan history into three categories, Early Minoan, Middle Minoan, and Late Minoan, each of which was further divided into three subcategories (EM I, II, III etc.), which in turn were further divided alphabetically (ex: LM IA).⁷⁶ Finding these dates too narrow and rigid to be supported by the evidence of pottery styles and stratigraphy, modern scholars have revised the above system as follows:

⁷⁴ Pliny the Elder xxxvi, 19.13. In D'Agata 2010, p. 60.

⁷⁵ D'Agata 2010, p. 63.

⁷⁶ Biers 1996, p. 25.

Table I: Minoan Chronology⁷⁷

Prepalatial period (Early Minoan IA-Middle Minoan IA)	ca. 3100-1925 BC
Protopalatial period (Middle Minoan IB and II)	ca. 1925-1725 BC
Neopalatial period (Middle Minoan III and Late Minoan I, II, and IIIA1)	ca. 1725-1380 BC
Post-Palatial period (Late Minoan IIIA2, IIIB, and IIIC)	ca. 1380-1000 BC

As the names of each period suggest, the chronology is based on the different phases of the so-called palace at Knossos and several other Minoan “palaces.” Evans’ misguided attempt to identify the complex is still so prevalent that Minoan history is understood as framed by the history of this “palace.” Each period describes a different phase in the history of these places. In the Prepalatial period, as the name suggests, none of the palaces had been built yet. The Protopalatial period saw the construction of the first “palaces” at Knossos as well as Phaistos and Mallia.⁷⁸ Sometime in MMII or MMIII, (ca. 1750-1700 BC) an earthquake destroyed these

⁷⁷ Biers 1996, p. 25; Preziosi and Hitchcock 1999, p. 242.

⁷⁸ Preziosi and Hitchcock 1999, p. 242. Phaistos is on the southern border of the island while Mallia is on the northern coast east of Knossos.

structures, and the second palaces at Knossos and Phaistos were built.⁷⁹ Near the end of the Neopalatial period, around 1450 BC, the Mycenaeans arrived on Crete, ushering in the Mycenaean age on the island.⁸⁰

Within the first few weeks of excavation, Evans and his crew had uncovered the first of many exciting finds. Evans, as previously stated, was an imaginative, creative soul with a fascination for the ancient. In fact, before Evans began work at the site, it was referred to as Knosos, but, knowing that sites with a double “s” in their name sound more ancient, he changed the site name to Knossos, to give the general public a better idea of its great antiquity simply from its name.⁸¹ Nothing better demonstrates his overactive imagination than a comparison between his account of one of their first finds and that of Duncan MacKenzie, an Irishman with a PhD in Classics from Vienna, who worked alongside Evans at Knossos. On discovering pieces of fresco that depicted human figures, Evans rejoiced, writing in his diary:

“A great day! Early in the morning the gradual surface uncovering of the Corridor to E. of “Megaron” near its S. end revealed two large pieces of Myc. fresco...One represented the head and forehead, the other the waist and part of the skirt of a female figure holding in her hand a long Mycenaean “rhyton” or high funnel shaped cup...The figure was life size with flesh colours of a deep reddish hue like that of the figures on Etruscan tomb & the Keftiu of Egyptian paintings. The profile of the face was of a noble type: full lips, the lower lip showing a slight peculiarity of curve below. The eye was dark and somewhat almond [shaped] apparently partly in profile out-facing as Egyptian shaped. In front of the ear is a kind of ornament and a necklace and bracelet are visible. The arms are beautifully modeled. The waist is of the smallest...It is far and away the most remarkable human figure of the Mycenaean Age that has yet come to light.”⁸²

⁷⁹ Tartan 2007, p. 99.

⁸⁰ Preziosi and Hitchcock 1999, p. 242.

⁸¹ Marinatos 2015, p. 43.

⁸² Evans 1900, p. 19. Accessed in MacGillivray 2000, 178-179.

In the above passage, with its assumptions about the origins of Mycenaean culture, Evans waxes poetic about these fresco pieces in much the same way as he did about the Bosnian countryside. He sees in these bits of ancient plaster a beautiful woman, who informs the modern investigator of her glorious civilization. In his notebook, he referred to this fresco as “the Ariadne,” the daughter of Minos, showing his determination to associate all his finds with the king and his family.⁸³ As we shall see, this interpretation is incorrect. Evans also makes references to Egypt; Marinatos observes that compared to most of his contemporary western scholars, Evans referenced eastern civilizations more frequently.⁸⁴ This observation is rather surprising, as Evans was mainly interested in drawing parallels between ancient Minoan culture and modern Western civilization, but does give him some credibility; he does not rule out the presence of more Eastern influences, however much he might downplay them while emphasizing the connection between Minoan Crete and the West.⁸⁵ Below is Evans’ sketch of the fresco (Figure VI a) next to the actual fresco (Figure VI b).

⁸³ MacGillivray 2000, p. 184. In myth Ariadne is King Minos’ daughter who helps Theseus navigate the labyrinth to kill the Minotaur.

⁸⁴ Marinatos 2015, p. 23. Referenced during comparison of Evans’s interpretation of a Mycenaean ring versus that of Schliemann. While Schliemann declared the figures on the ring “utterly Homeric,” Evans found similarities to both Greek and Egyptian mythology in the iconography, thus suggesting greater Eastern influences at Mycenae than his contemporary western scholars would admit.

⁸⁵ Hood 2005, p. 54.

Figure VI a and b: Evans' sketch of the so-called Ariadne Fresco⁸⁶ next to rhyton bearing figure from the Procession Fresco⁸⁷



Figure VII: Procession Fresco with rhyton bearing youth on the far right⁸⁸



⁸⁶ MacGillivray, 2000, photo insert after p.184.

⁸⁷ *Palace of Minos: Procession: Det.: Youth Bearing a Rhyton*, University of San Diego, California. Accessed via JSTOR.

⁸⁸ *Wall Painting*, University of San Diego, California. Accessed via JSTOR.

While Evans created a fanciful picture of what he thought was a woman, MacKenzie's description is much more matter of fact and more accurate. He characterizes the fresco as:

"the head, life-size of a human figure (youth) with the right hand holding the handle of the same vase. A little later part of the body including the left arm and hand came into view...The figure was bare to the waist. Round the waist was a blue band with double spirals in black on a red ground over blue. The hips were covered with a tight fitting loin-cloth with a complex system of rosettes...the legs below the level of the loin-cloth were not preserved."⁸⁹

MacKenzie's description is a far more practical discussion of what they actually found than Evans'. MacKenzie focuses on the fresco itself, omitting any details which are not obvious from the physical remains, while Evans romanticizes it based on his own observations, which may or may not have been well founded. For example, while Evans clearly refers to the figure as female, MacKenzie refers to the figure as a youth in a loincloth, a male. In Evans' description of "the Ariadne," he discusses the "deep reddish hue" of the skin. In ancient Aegean art, including at Knossos, men's skin was painted darker and women's fairer as demonstrated in the fresco pieces discussed here and later in this chapter.⁹⁰ The dark skin of this figure thus makes it likely to be a man rather than Princess Ariadne, as we now know. This figure is part of the Procession fresco (figure VII), found in what has come to be known as the Procession Corridor, located on the far southwest side of the complex, leading to the West Porch.⁹¹ The Procession fresco has been reconstructed using the fragments found in the corridor.

Before moving on, it is important to discuss Evans' attribution of the fresco to the Mycenaeans, which follows from his goal of establishing a predecessor for Mycenaean culture

⁸⁹ MacGillivray 2000, p. 179

⁹⁰ Eaverly 2016, p. 85.

⁹¹ Hood 2005, p. 46 and 66.

on Crete. According to Evans, by the time this fresco was made, Mycenaean civilization was present on Crete. He assigned this fresco to the LM IA or IB period (1600-1500 BC), which shows that Evans believed that by this time the Mycenaeans had arrived on Crete. While the influence of Minoan culture on Mycenae may not have been as direct as Evans wished it to be, it certainly still existed. For example, evidence of Minoan tools evident in the well-cut masonry at Mycenae in the early Mycenaean period (c. 1600-1500 BC) suggest the presence of Minoan craftsmen on mainland Greece, or at least their influence.⁹² One such tool is a tubular drill with a hollow bit, used on Crete dating back to the Protopalatial period, but not evidenced in Mycenae until around 1500 BC.⁹³ The two also would have competed in trade. As the Minoan civilization waned, Mycenae was reaching its peak, and thus there is evidence that Mycenaean trade routes overtook Minoan ones, and upon the final destruction of Knossos in 1400 BC, Mycenae became the sea power that Crete once was.⁹⁴ Though the two peoples had a complex relationship, they were not related ethnically.⁹⁵

I have included these two discussions of a painted figure at Knossos to acquaint the reader more thoroughly with Evans' style as an archaeologist. Never one to stick to the simple, straightforward facts, Evans seemingly had to create a narrative to go along with his finds, whether or not he was totally justified in making the leap from artifact to history. With this attribute of Evans in mind, we can now continue to a more thorough overview of his work at Knossos. Throughout his first few field seasons, Evans and his workmen made a great many

⁹² Blackwell 2014, p. 454.

⁹³ Blackwell 2014, p. 454.

⁹⁴ Blackwell 2014, p. 454.

⁹⁵ Marinatos 2015.

impressive finds. It quickly became evident to Evans that they had found what he called a palace, one which had been built and rebuilt several times.

Among his early finds on the west side of the site, in the section he came to call the magazine, was underground storage for surplus goods. There he found a number of *pithoi* (large clay storage vessels), as well as several thousand clay tablets inscribed with two ancient writing forms known as Linear A and Linear B. This discovery was among Evans' most significant, as Linear A is the script from which the later Mycenaean script now known as Linear B borrowed several symbols.⁹⁶ While the latter has been deciphered, to this day Linear A remains mostly undeciphered to this day. The two scripts were first referred to as "linear" by Evans in his first field seasons at Knossos because the characters in both scripts were composed of incised lines.⁹⁷ Evans assumed that Linear A and Linear B were essentially the same script, as he noted the similarities between the two. However, they differed in their numerical system with their treatment of fractional quantities. The Linear A fractional system is underdeveloped, while Linear B has precise fractional quantities divided into smaller units.⁹⁸ John Chadwick, one of several people who worked on the decipherment of Linear B, uses the prevalence of Linear A on Crete until the 15th century BC to show that at that point Minoan culture had not yet been dominated by the mainland Mycenaean civilization and language.⁹⁹ Already in his first field season, Evans had discovered a linguistic link between his ancient Minoan civilization and the Mycenaeans which, if the language originated on Crete rather than mainland Greece, would

⁹⁶ Chadwick 1967, p. 15.

⁹⁷ Evans 1901, p. 97. In Schoep 2018, p. 9.

⁹⁸ Chadwick 1967, p. 15.

⁹⁹ Chadwick 1967, p. 103.

greatly help prove his theory about Minoan influence on mainland Greek culture. In fact, Linear B has been demonstrated to be a very early form of Greek language.¹⁰⁰ This connection is one of the ways in which Evans was able to associate Minoan culture with later Greek civilizations, inadvertently establishing the proper sequence of development.

In 1900, Evans and his workmen unearthed the so-called “Throne Room,” on the west side of the “palace.” This room is what gave Evans the full confidence to declare the site of Knossos a palace. It was in a rather odd position for a throne room, in what would be considered the basement of the palace, but Evans was undeterred.¹⁰¹ Against the center of the northern wall sat a grand chair made of gypsum, and a built-in stone bench on either side. What remained of the wall was covered in bits of fresco, as shown in Figure VII, below.

¹⁰⁰ Tracy 2018, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Papadopoulos 2005, p. 105. Papadopoulos points out that this would be essentially the only throne room in all of Europe built in a basement, thus showing his skepticism as to whether Evans correctly identified the room.

Figure VIII: Throne Room Pre-Restoration¹⁰²



Unsurprisingly, Evans wrote a romantic account about the Throne Room, just as he had about the so-called Ariadne fresco. He raves about the “elaborate decoration, the stately aloofness, superior size and elevation of the gypsum seat [which] sufficiently declare it to be a throne....”¹⁰³ When Evans first uncovered the throne room, he dubbed the chair “Ariadne’s throne.” Harriet Boyd, an American archaeologist and the first woman to dig at Knossos, recorded his excitement at the find, and assumed he was joking by naming the chair “Ariadne’s throne.”¹⁰⁴ Gazing upon the rather sparse remains pictured above, Evans once again creates a story based on insufficient evidence to support his theory. Today it is widely believed that Evans misidentified this room, although thus far there is insufficient evidence to declare its actual

¹⁰² Preziosi and Hitchcock 1999, p. 17.

¹⁰³ Evans 1899–1900, p. 42. Accessed from Schoep, 2015, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ MacGillivray 2000, p. 180.

purpose, or the function of the compound in which it lies.¹⁰⁵ This lack of evidence could very well be due, at least in part, to Evans' extensive reconstruction of the site, which was all based on the preconception that Knossos was a palace.

In order to better preserve the "Throne Room," Evans had a temporary roof built over it in 1901, replaced by a more permanent structure in 1904, and finally by a concrete reconstruction in 1930. In constructing the roof in 1901, he attempted to make it as authentically Minoan as possible. He took the design for the pillars which supported the roof from a fresco of a temple façade so that he might "avoid the introduction of any incongruous elements amid such surroundings."¹⁰⁶ However he could not find a Knossian model for the iron railing and door which were also necessary, and so he had an ironsmith from nearby Candia construct them, presumably so that though these parts of the building were not Minoan, they at least were made by someone from the island.¹⁰⁷ In 1930, this less permanent construction was replaced by a thorough "reconstitution." Below are images of the restored Throne Room from 1930 to compare with the 1900 image showing what Evans actually found *in situ* (see figures IX and X to contrast with Figure VII).

¹⁰⁵ Preziosi and Hitchcock 1999, p. 89.

¹⁰⁶ Evans 1901, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Evans 1901, p. 2. The pillars were made by D. T. Fyfe, formerly an architect at the British School of Athens, while the door and rail were made by a local artisan. It is interesting that when working from a model, Evans employs an English architect, and for non-Minoan structures employs a local. Perhaps this habit demonstrates his desire to have some kind of "authenticity" in all his reconstructions, no matter how temporally far removed from the ancient complex it may be.

Figure IX: 1930 Interior View of the Reconstructed Throne Room¹⁰⁸



Figure X: 1930 Exterior View of Concrete Walls and Roof of Throne Room¹⁰⁹



¹⁰⁸ Papadopoulos 2005, p. 112.

¹⁰⁹ Papadopoulos 2005, p. 112.

These two images, particularly the one depicting the interior of the reconstructed Throne Room, leave little to the imagination concerning the room's use. Evans has imposed his palatial view upon the viewer and thus greatly hindered anyone seeking to find evidence to support a different use for the room. Elizabeth Price, a British artist who created an exhibition on Evans, put it well when she said that his reconstructions are "a good example of that which art can do but which archaeology probably shouldn't attempt! So maybe he's a better artist than archaeologist...?"¹¹⁰

The discovery, excavation, covering, and reconstruction of the "Throne Room" spanned thirty years, the majority of the time which Evans spent at Knossos. He accomplished most of the excavations during his first few years at the site, and then set about creating what he called reconstitutions, such as the one mentioned above.

Amongst the people who helped Evans with his restorations were Émile Gilliéron and his son of the same name.¹¹¹ Figure XI depicts the elder Gilliéron, while Figure XII shows the son with architect Christian Doll. Both pictures were taken at the Villa Ariadne, Evans' home on the site of Knossos.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Price 2017, p. 52.

¹¹¹ Papadopoulos 2005, p. 99.

¹¹² Price 2017, p. 74.

Figure XI: Émile Gilliéron, father



Figure XII: Émile Gilliéron, son (left) with architect Christian Doll (right)¹¹³

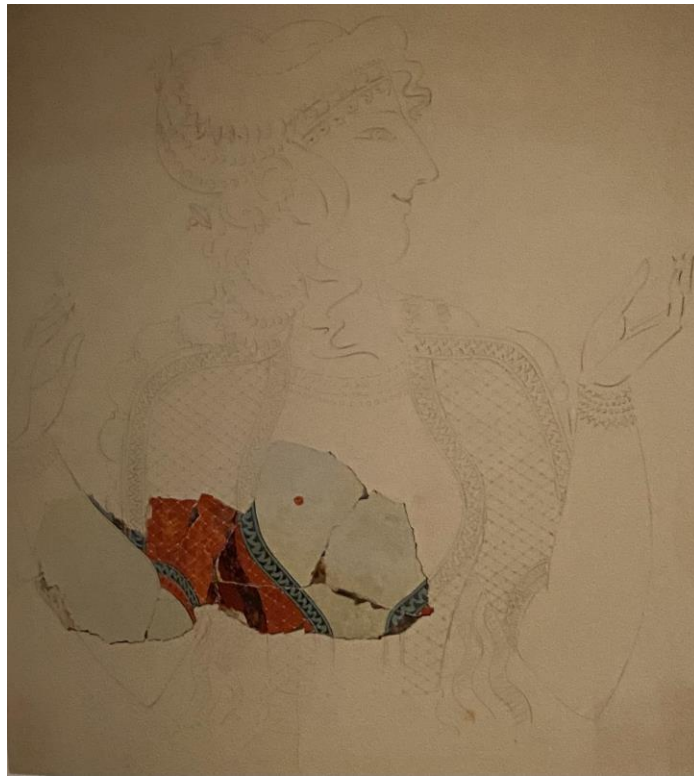


The two Émiles were the chief fresco restorers at Knossos, and their interpretations of the fresco fragments there greatly influence the way the site is viewed in modern times. Below are

¹¹³ Price 2017, p. 74.

several images and descriptions of their restorations to show just how much of the original image they extrapolated from small fragments (Figure XIII, Figure XIV).

Figure XIII: Lady in Red¹¹⁴



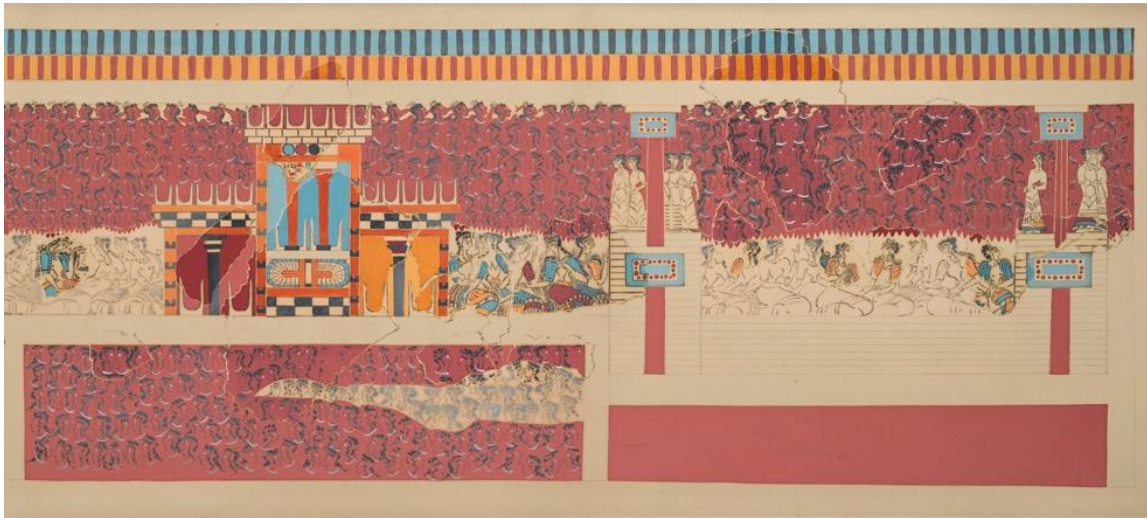
The above sketch (ca 1914) by Émile Gilliéron the elder is based on a fragment of a fresco from the Northwest Fresco Heap at Knossos. This figure became known as the Lady in Red.¹¹⁵ This sketch shows how much of the fresco was recreated from such sparse original material. Evans and Gilliéron conjectured about this woman's appearance in much the same way as they guessed how the columns they reconstructed in the "throne room" should look. They

¹¹⁴ Price 2017, p. 53.

¹¹⁵ Price 2017, p. 53.

based her appearance on other women in Minoan art.¹¹⁶ For example, below is a watercolor of another fresco found at Knossos, the so-called Grandstand Fresco, this copy painted by the elder Gilliéron some time before 1914. A quick look at the painting of the ancient fresco, reproduced here in part to focus on the appearance of the women in the stands, will show a group of women with very similar styles of hair and dress to the Lady in Red.

Figure XIV: Watercolor of Grandstand Fresco¹¹⁷



Most of this fresco is reconstructed, with the exception of the pieces outlined in white. Several main patches of the crowd scene above, one of which preserves part of the framing border, are original. In the zone below, where there appear to be many women seated on the right and standing women on the left, the surviving fragments are those preserving color. Most

¹¹⁶ Cameron 1971, p. 37.

¹¹⁷ Price 2017, p. 63. The fresco was found in 1900, in the first field season. It has been dated by various scholars to somewhere between MM IIIB-LM IB.

of the fresco, however, is a reconstruction based on the replication of the surviving original pieces. As mentioned, the original fragments are the ones which retain color, and some of them depict seated women with hairstyles piled high upon their heads with a headband and one forelock hanging down. The women wear jackets which cover their shoulders and expose their breasts. These are the few surviving fresco fragments on which the entire “Grandstand Fresco” is based. The hairstyles and costumes of these seated women are used as parallels for the restoration of the Lady in Red’s appearance. But the women in the Grandstand fresco are on a much smaller scale than the Lady in Red. In addition, the jacket of the Lady in Red extends down the side of her torso, framing her breasts. This detail is absent in the Grandstand Fresco costumes.

This disparity could simply be due to the smaller size of these figures, but it is perhaps here where Evans’ and Guilleri3n’s imagination steps into play and introduces modern English features to ancient dress. In spite of the women’s exposed breasts, they were able to draw similarities between the costumes of the women in these frescoes and those of Victorian women.¹¹⁸ Evans wrote that “we seem to see the Court ladies in their brilliant modern costume with pinched waists and puffed sleeves seated in groups and exchanging glances with elegant youths in the court below.”¹¹⁹ The modernity of Minoan women’s dress in reconstructed frescoes and statuettes astounded many of his contemporaries, who wrote articles about the

¹¹⁸ The most notable similarity is the tightly cinched waistline with the bustled skirt expanding out below, one of the hallmarks of Victorian dress.

¹¹⁹ Evans 1905; quoted in Papadopoulos 2005, p. 101.

“modern appearance of [Minoan] women’s dress...They almost look as if they stepped out of some early or mid-Victorian fashion plate.”¹²⁰

Of course, not everyone was entranced by the modernity of Evans’ Minoan women; some were suspicious of these similarities in dress. This critique of Evans, that he modernized the concept of Minoan clothing, is common, as is the observation that much of his restorations, including the frescoes, appears to be based on the Art Nouveau style rather than any substantial ancient evidence. One such complaint about Evans’ interpretation of Minoan culture and art comes from the satirist Evelyn Waugh who visited Crete in 1929:

“I accompanied a party of fellow passengers to the museum to admire the barbarities of Minoan culture. One cannot well judge the merits of Minoan painting, since only a few square inches of the vast area exposed to our consideration are earlier than the last twenty years, and their painters have tempered their zeal for reconstruction with a predilection for covers of *Vogue*.”¹²¹

Even in Evans’ own time, he had critics who mocked his use of modern motifs in his reconstruction of the ancient. But any publicity is good publicity, and the discovery of an ancient civilization with significant cultural similarities to modern western civilization tantalized the press, which covered Evans’ excavation extensively, making it one of the most popular sites of its time.¹²² Just as Evans had raised sympathy for the Bosnian plight by drawing parallels between the Bosnians and the British, he now piqued the interest of potential patrons by portraying his work as vital to the discovery of the ancient history of western civilization.¹²³ Also

¹²⁰ Papadopoulos 2005, p. 122. Excerpt from the *Daily Mail* newspaper from 13 July, 1928.

¹²¹ Waugh 1930, pp. 50-51. Accessed in Lapatin 2017, p. 79.

¹²² Papadopoulos 2005, p. 93.

¹²³ Momigliano 2002, p. 76.

as in Bosnia, Evans' appropriation of Greek myth and use of modern themes in his restorations served a deeper purpose.

Evans grew up in an age in which the search for mankind's prehistoric roots first really took off, due in great part to the publications of early evolutionary theory, such as that of Charles Darwin. Darwin and John Evans, Arthur's father, were acquaintances, and so the young Evans grew up indoctrinated in the evolutionary theory, which created a linear timeline for the development of humanity.¹²⁴ According to this theory, human history had developed from "Savagery" to "Barbarism" to "Civilization."¹²⁵ It now becomes evident that in his Knossian excavation Evans was searching for the point at which humanity made the jump from "Barbarism" to "Civilization." This sequence of social development greatly influenced Evans' interpretations and led to a great deal of his problematic reconstitutions. He hoped to show that a more ancient, culturally and racially superior civilization existed before the Greeks, and he attempted to accomplish this goal by creating an image of an unusually modern "palace" which in his mind was far more advanced than that of the later Greeks.¹²⁶

Another example of Evans' modern bias is his interpretation or creation (both apt terms) of the famous Minoan snake goddess (or mother goddess as she is also known). In 1903 Evans discovered the so-called temple repository behind what he identified as an important shrine, on the west side of the large open courtyard around which the complex was built (Figure XV).

¹²⁴ MacGillivray 2000, p. 70.

¹²⁵ MacGillivray 2000, p. 70.

¹²⁶ Momigliano 2002, p. 78.

Figure XV: Contents of the Temple Repository¹²⁷



This area gave him the first glimpse into Minoan religion.¹²⁸ It is difficult to date this deposit, but scholars have attempted to do so based on the vases found therein.¹²⁹ The designs on various vases fit within the MM IIB-LM I period (ca. 1750-1400BC), suggesting that the shrine was in use up to LM I. The deposit contained small statuettes made of faience, a glazed ceramic material. The snake goddess images as well as the dresses hanging on the wall behind are also made from faience. In the chamber along with the figures, Evans found the skull of a

¹²⁷ Panagiotaki 1993, p. 55.

¹²⁸ MacGillivray 2000, p. 223. Preziosi and Hitchcock 1999, p. 96-97.

¹²⁹ Panagiotaki 1998, p. 185.

small weasel-like creature as well as a fish's vertebrae.¹³⁰ The bones were coiled behind the skull so that it looked like a snake skeleton, which Evans took to mean that the shrine was dedicated to a snake goddess. One figurine held a snake in the right hand, and the presence of so much snake iconography cemented the goddess's identity as a snake deity (Figure XV). Evans believed that here he had found evidence of the great Minoan goddess. He believed the Minoans practiced a type of monotheism in that they worshipped one goddess in different forms.¹³¹

Noting the "matronly bosom" of both these statuettes, Evans declared that the snake goddess must also be a mother goddess, a Minoan adaptation of the Anatolian Cybele, an ancient eastern mother goddess.¹³² I must note here that Evans based the idea of a singular mother goddess on rather flimsy evidence, and took the lack of substantial evidence for other gods or goddesses in Minoan religion to mean that they did not exist. By declaring ancient Crete monotheistic, Evans yet again drew on modern trends: the western world, historically overwhelmingly Christian, is associated with monotheism and thus Evans portrayed Minoan culture as advanced by declaring them monotheists in a world where most other cultures worshipped a whole pantheon. The object that looks like a cross was probably from the gypsum paving that sealed the deposit in which the items were found.¹³³ The display of this cross, which was probably not a religious item, in the center of the cult objects in Figure XV seems to be a

¹³⁰ Panagiotaki 1993, p. 55.

¹³¹ Marinatos 2015, p. 59. She bases this assertion on the fact that in the temple repository Evans found items associated with a nature goddess, and he also discovered her symbols in ca. LM I Tomb of the Double Axes, which led him to declare her goddess of the underworld as well. As goddess of both the over and underworlds, the Minoan mother goddess ruled over all aspects of life.

¹³² Panagiotaki 1993, p. 54. Anatolia is on the northeastern border of the Mediterranean, part of Asia Minor.

¹³³ Panagiotaki 1993, p. 90.

not-so-subtle nod to monotheism, specifically Christianity, which might strengthen the association between Bronze Age Crete and 20th century England to viewers.

This is not to say that Evans purposefully manipulated the evidence, but merely to suggest that perhaps here his interpretation was influenced by his preconceived notions of what constitutes an advanced society. Below is a sketch showing which parts of the figurine are ancient fragments and which are reconstructed. Next to it is the figurine as she exists today. The drawing on the left is a sketch showing which parts of the figurine have been reconstructed, while the statuette itself is on the right.

Figure XVI: Snake Goddess Sketch (left, showing reconstructed vs original fragments) and Statuette (right)¹³⁴



¹³⁴ Papadopoulos 2005, p. 123.

In the sketch, the darker, shaded parts represent the original pieces, while the rest, including most of the skirt as well as the left arm and snake and half of the right snake, are all parts of a modern restoration which is both based on other images of Minoan women, such as the previously discussed frescoes, and a logical guess as to how the original pieces fit together. With such a great part of the snake goddess' dress restored, the question arises of how much of her costume's modernity is original, and how much is imposed, whether knowingly or based on some implicit bias. In addition, the ancient parts of the statuette did not exist as a cohesive whole, but rather were put together from fragments found in the Knossos Temple Repositories.¹³⁵ Thus even the authenticity of the ancient materials as part of a snake goddess figurine is in question, making it an unreliable source on which to base an assertion about Minoan religious practices.

The snake goddess is a key aspect to an analysis of Evans' creation of the Minoan civilization, as she both represents the manufactured Bronze Age religion and female dress.¹³⁶ In discovering and creating this deity, he was able to both mirror modern religion with his ancient monotheistic civilization and to create a costume similar enough to Victorian English dress that he could draw a parallel between the two. Thus, this goddess is an excellent direct bridge between Bronze Age Crete and early 20th century England, with no four-thousand-year gap for the development of humanity necessary.

¹³⁵ Papadopoulos 2005, p. 123.

¹³⁶ Many aspects of the snake goddess' costume are also found in late Victorian English dress, although the exposed breasts are certainly not. The figurine's skirt puffs out as if she is wearing a bustle, creating a contrast between her tiny, corseted waist and large bustle. As mentioned previously, this look was all the rage in late 1800s England.

As shown in this chapter, Evans' work at Knossos was not so much a discovery of an ancient civilization as the creation of one. He used bits of fragmentary evidence to construct a larger picture that probably never existed in ancient times, and was exclusively the product of his own vivid imagination. Evans invented a fascinating world in which the women dressed in modern style, the people were ruled by a priest-king in a palace, as we shall see, and the people worshipped a snake/mother goddess. Sadly, this intriguing nation never existed, and Evans' creation of it may distract us from discovering the civilization that did exist there.

Chapter III: Evans, Cretans, and Minoans

Unsurprisingly, both Evans's humanitarian work in Bosnia and his conception of the ancient Minoans played into his relationship with the modern Cretans. In this chapter we will examine one specific artifact, the so-called Priest-King fresco, which may exemplify one aspect of the English bias Evans brought to his work at Knossos. After examining potential biases, we will turn to the modern Cretans to understand their opinions of Knossos and the work which Evans carried out there. The first question explored into this chapter is important because it can potentially answer the question of why Evans carried out the reconstructions which he did at Knossos. The reception of the local Cretans is also significant because it highlights the reception of Evans' work by the people closest to it.

Evans brought with him and incorporated into his work at Knossos his western European biases, to the point that he created an ancient society similar to his own modern one. His nationalist ideas played into his conception of the Minoan civilization; he viewed it as a strong, ancient sea-faring island kingdom much like his homeland, the sea-faring island empire of Great Britain. A passage from Evans' *The Palace of Minos* quoted in Chapter 1 also belongs here, as it demonstrates his conception of ancient Knossos.

“The Achaean Vikings who first penetrated to that site through that haven—it offered the first glimpse of the mighty pile reared as their central residency by the Minoan Priest-Kings. Immediately backed as it was by the ancient Keep that had formed the original nucleus of the whole edifice, this entrance system never to the last lost its character of a fortified approach.”¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Evans 1935, p. 7.

As previously discussed, the “Achaean Vikings” are the Mycenaeans, who invaded Crete around 1450 BC. His description of the “mighty pile” of Knossos gives the reader insight into what type of civilization he created there.

Evans’ use of the term “Minoan Priest-Kings” is most telling of the modern nature of his Minoan civilization. Let us now consider further Evans’ assertion that the Minoans were ruled by a single “priest-king” at Knossos. This assumption was based largely on the evidence of the Throne Room from which he imagined this leader would rule, and which most modern scholars agree could not have been, in fact, a space of the sort Evans envisioned, though there is no consensus concerning how it was actually used.¹³⁸ This supposed priest-king ruled over religious, social and political affairs, which would have made him an anomaly in ancient times.¹³⁹ Thus today it is widely believed that the “priest-king,” much like both the palace and the Throne Room, is an invention of Evans’ based partly on archaeological evidence but mostly on his own imagination and cultural assumptions.¹⁴⁰

The aforementioned archaeological evidence included a heavily manipulated fresco now known as the “Lily Prince” but to which Evans referred as the “Priest-King.”¹⁴¹ Pictured below, the “Lily Prince” is a problematic fresco which demonstrates several of the issues with Evans’ reconstructions and also may give important insight into his motives behind these “reconstitutions” (Figure XVII).

¹³⁸ Papadopoulos 2005, p. 105. Schoep 2018, p. 15. Gere 2011, p. 108-111.

¹³⁹ Schoep 2018, p. 25.

¹⁴⁰ Schoep 2018, p. 25. Papadopoulos 2005, p. 129.

¹⁴¹ Gere 2011, p. 119-121.

Figure XVII: The Lily Prince¹⁴²



The Lily Prince is made of fragments found in 1901 in a basement deposit of fresco fragments in the southern wing of the palace.¹⁴³ This figure dates from ca. MM IIIB-LM IB. Whatever the date, archaeologists agree that it was not displayed during the final days of the Minoan civilization (LM III).¹⁴⁴ Evans used several fragments from the west basement fresco heap in order to construct his Priest-King. As seen above, parts of the torso, one leg, and the ear

¹⁴² Photo taken by visitor to Heraklion Archaeological Museum.

¹⁴³ Gere 2011, p. 120.

¹⁴⁴ Shaw 2004, p. 77.

are all original fresco, while the rest of the scene is the invention of Evans and Gillieron the younger. The piecing together of all these fragments is problematic for a couple of reasons, and the resulting fresco clearly contributes to Evans' created Minoan culture.

The first issue with the above figure is the consolidation of the body fragments to form them into one figure when they most likely make up at least two different figures.¹⁴⁵ Upon closer inspection, the body is turned so that one looking solely upon the torso might expect the head to face to its left, but it has been reconstructed to face right. Modern scholars have used this evidence to attempt more accurate reconstructions of the two figures, which is an interesting endeavor but ultimately a moot point as insufficient evidence remains to definitively prove the relationship of either.

Evans also misgendered this figure, like his "Ariadne". While the skin of the Lily Prince is more white than ruddy, which would make the person most likely female, he explained the lack of color as a fading over time.¹⁴⁶ The crown atop the figure's head is also of a style worn by females.¹⁴⁷ Both of these misinterpretations are important to examine as ways in which Evans' reading of the fresco resulted from his own cultural biases and personal agenda. In the 1880s and 1890s, England was suffering from a number of social and political problems. In urban areas, overpopulation forced people out onto the streets, while an agricultural depression caused by a bad harvest and cheaper wheat prices from America began and did not end until after

¹⁴⁵ Gere 2011, p. 121.

¹⁴⁶ Gere 2011, p. 121.

¹⁴⁷ Shaw 2004, p. 65

World War I.¹⁴⁸ This late Victorian period was a time of intense change, full of socio-economic crises and reforms which brought about a completely different England than earlier in Victorian times.¹⁴⁹ This period also saw efforts by the Irish and Welsh people to claim some sort of national identity, which chafed against the conservative English rule.¹⁵⁰

In light of this ongoing domestic strife, it may come as no surprise that Evans would attempt to create a culture both similar to his own and, at the same time, at peace both with itself and its neighbors. He created a strong, monarchic ruler in the Priest-King, under whose authority fell both church and state, and a mother goddess who blessed her worshippers.¹⁵¹ It is possible, as Cathy Gere has suggested, that Evans' trauma from the loss of his mother at an early age could also have contributed to his characterization of the powerful, nurturing snake goddess.¹⁵² The relationship between snake goddess and priest was almost like that of mother and son, which Evans never knew and sorely missed. It is also possible that Evans' creation of the Priest-King and snake goddess stemmed from his desire to see a united modern Crete.

After the Ottomans left Crete in 1898, due in large part to the intervention of powerful nations including England and Russia, the island became "semi-independent," and the Greek state sent Prince George, the second son of their king, ostensibly to help create a Cretan

¹⁴⁸ Searle 2004, p. 174.

¹⁴⁹ Searle 2004, p. 3. Among these upheavals was the rise of labor unions which fought their management for higher wages, as well as a series of economic crises which had to be resolved, including trade tariffs and livestock shortages.

¹⁵⁰ Searle 2004, p. 167.

¹⁵¹ It is interesting to note here the similarity between the Minoan Priest-King and the position of the English monarch as ruler over both state and the Church of England. It is possible that in creating this ruler Evans was influenced, however subconsciously, by his own culture. In addition, the strong female figure of the snake goddess could in some ways be paralleled to Queen Victoria, the female ruler of England from 1837-1901, which was most of Evans' life.

¹⁵² Gere 2011.

constitution, but in fact to try to draw Crete into a union with Greece.¹⁵³ In 1904, Prince George suggested that Crete follow the political path of the liberated Bosnia and Herzegovina, now ruled by the Austro-Hungarians, that is, being freed from Ottoman control and shortly thereafter united with another country. Insulted by Prince George's efforts to bring them into union with Greece, Cretan officials fought for a completely autonomous Crete, and the clashes of their political ideology with the prince led to his ultimate departure six years before Crete finally united with Greece in 1913.¹⁵⁴

In addition to the political strife on the newly liberated island, Christian and Muslim animosity reached new heights, ultimately leading to a Muslim exodus. The two ethnic groups clashed in many sectors, most notably in agriculture, Crete's main economy. The Christians carried out a scorched earth practice, burning down Muslim warehouses, barns, and livestock. The Cretan state ultimately paid compensation of over 100 million drachmas.¹⁵⁵ In light of such oppression, many Muslim Cretans decided to leave the island, resulting in the exodus of roughly 40,000 Muslims from 1881-1900.¹⁵⁶ Upon his arrival in the early 1900s, Evans stumbled upon a familiar scene: a state in upheaval after the departure of the Ottoman regime. Just as with his humanitarian work in Bosnia, Evans wished to settle the issues amongst the different ethnic groups on the island of Crete as best he could, while at the same time carrying out his goal of excavating Knossos. In one of his letters from Crete, Evans wrote his assessment of the issue.

¹⁵³ Carabott 2006, p. 42.

¹⁵⁴ Carabott 2006, p. 42.

¹⁵⁵ Carabott 2006, p. 45.

¹⁵⁶ Carabott 2006, p. 44. Data about Muslim exodus from Crete taken from Table 1, showing the shift in population of Christians, Muslims, and Jews from 1881-1900.

“The devastation on both sides has been bitter and universal. In pecuniary damage the Christians are the greatest sufferers, since the stores and other property pillaged by the Turks in the towns is of greater value than the Mahometan villages destroyed in the country districts. [...] But, on the other hand, the Mahometan peasants have lost their little all. The villages are mere heaps of ruins. The roofs have been torn away for fire-wood and the rubble walls battered in; the mosques have been blown to pieces; the olives and vines have been cut; the whole country-side where Mahometan villagers once lived is a scene of desolation; the paths are almost impassable on account of the scattered debris of ruined walls and the torn limbs of fruit-bearing trees; dead animals have been thrown into the cisterns; the minarets in some cases have afforded crematories for the dead. The survivors are now [...] mostly refugees in Candia. How shall they ever return?”¹⁵⁷

In the above excerpt, Evans sympathizes with both the Muslims and Christians for the loss of property they have endured in this ethnic war. At the end, perhaps surprisingly for someone from a Christian nation, Evans laments the plight of the Cretan Muslims as refugees whose path home is anything but clear. We once again see Evans invested in the societal issues of people whom he would consider “lesser” than himself, but whom he nevertheless wishes to aid. One way he attempted to lessen the ethnic and religious animosity was through his employment of workmen at Knossos. Relatively little is known about the local people who worked on the site alongside Evans as far as their views on the work they were doing, however it is known that Evans employed Cretans of different backgrounds: men and women, Christian and Muslim. By hiring people of both Christian and Muslim faiths, Evans hoped to create a place for the two militant groups to interact with each other in a peaceful setting to quell their fighting.¹⁵⁸

The Cretans clearly already had their own connection to their ancient past, as evidenced by the coins released by the new administration of the Cretan Assembly over the recently freed island.¹⁵⁹ These coins depicted important heroic figures from Crete’s past, including Talos, the

¹⁵⁷ Evans 1898, p. 22-3. Mahometan means follower of Muhammed, the Islamic prophet.

¹⁵⁸ MacGillivray 2000, p. 174.

¹⁵⁹ MacGillivray 2000, p. 169.

giant bronze man who, according to the ancients, would hurl huge boulders at invading ships to protect the island, King Minos himself, and the more recent St. George and the dragon. The ancient figures on the coins point to Crete's glorious ancient history and were probably used in the midst of the domestic strife to remind the people that this greatness could be attained again.

The Christian imagery, (St. George and the dragon) sends a very clear message, claiming Crete, which had so recently been ruled by the Ottoman Empire, for Greece and the Christian church. Evans' work at Crete also operated under the agenda of claiming Crete for Greece, as he considered ancient Crete only as a pre-Hellenic site, focusing on the Minoans as they influenced and were influenced by Mycenaean culture, establishing them as the forerunners of the Greeks and considering them as so.¹⁶⁰ By viewing the Minoan culture as such, Evans established an ancient Western civilization which both gave his European homeland an ancient predecessor and gave modern Cretans an ancient connection to Greece.

In the midst of all this turmoil was the battle for Cretan identity between the east, west, and locals.¹⁶¹ While Evans' work at Knossos established an ancient Western tradition on the island, his efforts to unify the people of Crete regardless of their background was a service to the Cretans working on the site. Sadly, as mentioned before, we have very little first-hand evidence as to the local workmen's opinion of their work at the site of Knossos. We do know that they were employed in groups of five which would "dig out contiguous pits as staked out, competing against each other; the first prize being awarded to the group which first reaches a fixed level.

¹⁶⁰ MacGillivray 2000, p. 170.

¹⁶¹ Varouchakis 2018, p. 45.

The Cretan workmen enter into the spirit of this and put their full energy into the work, so that its progress is thus enormously speeded up.”¹⁶² This process was not unique to Evans and was employed at other archaeological sites at the time.¹⁶³ Many local Cretans had made money previously by selling looted antiquities, but as they now had employment excavating on the site, they had less motivation to steal and sell.¹⁶⁴

The presence of a foreign archaeologist was met with a mixed reception by the local people. A local newspaper article from 1907 shows the wary attitude of some Cretans. The author refers to Evans as “the honorable archaeologist,” and continues to describe his position as head archaeologist as “the despotism of the glorious archaeologist.”¹⁶⁵ The despotism in question here was that Cretan schoolchildren were not permitted to enter the site with Greek flags. This article reflects the fear that if their ancient roots were investigated by a foreigner, his interpretations would be marred by his own cultural bias and thus the site would not be truly Cretan, but rather a mix of different cultural perceptions of the site. This observation raises the question of whether a purely Cretan archaeological team would have created a more accurate picture of the ancient site or simply a different one. Regardless of the possible ethnic continuity from the ancient Minoans to modern Cretans,¹⁶⁶ the culture of 20th century Crete was over three thousand years removed from that of the people called the Minoans, so it is doubtful whether

¹⁶² Evans 1928, p. 93.

¹⁶³ Varouchakis 2018, p. 45.

¹⁶⁴ Varouchakis 2018, p. 48.

¹⁶⁵ Varouchakis 2018, p. 48.

¹⁶⁶ Anthropologist Aris Poulianos published a study in 1971 stating that based on the physiognomy and cranial measurement of modern Cretans compared to ancient skulls, the modern Cretan people were directly descended from the ancient Minoans, giving the island’s inhabitants over 3,000 years of racial continuity. Hamilakis 2006, 150.

their interpretations would have been any more accurate, simply based on Cretan cultural assumptions rather than British. That is not to say that local inhabitants have no claim over the antiquities found in their homeland, but merely to point out that it is impossible for any modern person to truly and unbiasedly understand the past, especially ancient history.

The opinions of several local Cretans about the ancient Minoan sites have been chronicled in a series of interviews by Chara Lenakake in the year 2000, explored by Yannis Hamilakis.¹⁶⁷ People's responses to Lenakake's questions varied, from viewing Minoan Crete as an important cultural predecessor to modern day Crete to completely unconcerned and uninterested in antiquities. One man reported that he had lived abroad for ten years, and from his experience visiting other archaeological sites he had gained an appreciation for the Minoan civilization and had even decorated his house in the Minoan style. He lamented that most local people have never been to and have no interest in the Minoan sites, claiming that in order to appreciate these places one would have to have been abroad. A middle-aged housewife from Sivas, Crete, near the ancient site of Phaistos, said that the ancient Minoan civilization both inspired and saddened her, as it made her proud to be a Cretan but that she felt shame for the less glorious and advanced state of their current society. A third person, a middle-aged farmer, reported that he couldn't care less about the ancient Minoans. He explained that Crete has been ruled and inhabited by so many different people groups that they do not have a real tie to the ancient Minoans, and so he wouldn't care to learn about them.

These varied responses give insight into the views of people from different parts of Crete. Overall, most people who looked to Minoan Crete as the greatest manifestation of their own

¹⁶⁷ Hamilakis 2006, pp. 155-156.

culture were those who lived closest to the excavated Minoan sites, such as Knossos and Phaistos, while those who lived in more rural places, like the farmer mentioned above, were less interested in and impressed by the Minoan civilization.¹⁶⁸ Just as with any society's view on its own history, there are as many different local opinions on Cretan history as there are localities, and each differs from the national view of the same history, which in turn varies from other nations' perceptions. At Knossos, all three of these views are important because they are all important parts of the excavation. Cretan archaeologists, both amateur and professional have worked on the site, but most of the restoration was carried out by Sir Arthur Evans, a foreigner from England.

In the international theater, late 19th and early 20th c. Crete was an important ideological battlefield between the east and the west, between its liberation from Turkey and the immediate attempts by Greece to force a union. The Christian Western nations supported this union, and Evans' excavations support this agenda by uniting the ancient Minoans, whom, as mentioned above, many Cretans regarded as their greatest cultural predecessors, with the Mycenaeans, the ancient counterpart to modern Greece. The national myth about the site was similar; advocating a union with Greece the government also focused on Crete as a pre-Hellenic site. The everyday people of Crete, however, viewed the Minoan civilization through a Creto-centric lens. Proud of their ancient cultural history, modern Cretans often use the ancient iconography found at Knossos in their art and architecture.¹⁶⁹ For example, a Cretan ferry company called Minoan

¹⁶⁸ Hamilakis 2006, pp. 155-156.

¹⁶⁹ Hamilakis 2006, pp. 153-154. Many buildings feature the double-headed axe associated with Minoan culture and Minoan sites are often the subject of modern Cretan art.

Lines not only takes its name from the ancient civilization, but also uses the Lily Prince fresco as its logo (Figure XVIII).

Figure XVIII: Minoan Lines Logo



Due to foreign intervention which chafed against local pride of the Minoan sites, a question present at most archaeological sites arose: where should the antiquities be displayed? And of course the question implicit within that one, to whom do these antiquities belong? All these questions came to a head in 1979. Wary of their ancient heritage being taken off to England and America for display, local fears were realized when an international antiquities exhibition at the Louvre and the Met was announced which would feature a display on Minoan Crete.¹⁷⁰ While the Cretan government agreed to send the artifacts, thousands of Cretan archaeologists, local authorities, and the people in general protested.

The articulated reason for this outrage was fear that the artifacts would be damaged in transit, but the people's secret fear was that while the artifacts were abroad, they would be copied and the copies sent back to Crete, while the originals remained abroad. Thus, the people of both Crete and Athens protested the removal of their artifacts with the cry "*molon labe*," or "come and take it," the Spartans famous challenge at Thermopylae.¹⁷¹ A New York Times article from

¹⁷⁰ Hamilakis 2006, pp. 145-146.

¹⁷¹ Hamilakis 2006, p. 146.

later that year explains that beneath what the author calls “the apparently irrational xenophobia” of the Cretans’ refusal to send their artifacts abroad are many “complex fears and animosities.” The author goes on to discuss the history of archaeology, and how recent laws restricting the buying and selling of artifacts has led to an increase in smuggling. He explains that the Cretans have had their ancient artifacts looted since the days of the Romans, and after all this time they are fed up and wish to hold on to their artifacts and the money from the tourism they bring.¹⁷² After a great deal of protests and fear of violence, the Cretan government gave in to the people, and the antiquities remained in Crete. This event demonstrates the difficulty in maintaining a site when different people with different claims to it disagree over how it should be used or displayed. While in 1979 the Cretan people won the fight for their artifacts, they had already lost it, in a way, since a foreign archaeologist had interpreted their history through his own cultural lens.

It is always difficult to determine who owns the past, who has the right to interpret certain events and sites, and Knossos is no exception. Although there is no simple, straightforward issue to the question of who owns the past, the American Institute of Archaeology touches on this issue in its vision statement, when it addresses the attitude archaeologists should take in their work excavating the history of humanity. “Archaeologists and the public share a passion for exploring the past. Knowledge of the past informs and inspires people in the present. Responsible stewardship of the archaeological heritage will ensure that it is preserved and interpreted for the common good.”¹⁷³ This statement touches on the relationship between archaeologists and the public in general, highlighting the importance that all people

¹⁷² New York Times, Oct. 28, 1979, p. 28.

¹⁷³ American Institute of Archaeology vision statement.

work together to ensure the best possible preservation and interpretation of sites. It is with this goal of archaeological integrity in mind that scholars today study the materials at Knossos.

Arthur Evans' excavation falls short of meeting this ideal, as he cemented his own interpretation of Minoan culture with his many misinformed reconstructions, but perhaps it is unfair to judge yesterday's archaeologists based on today's standards. Regardless, it is debatable whether Evans' interpretations of Knossos were "for the common good," though it is apparent that he thought so. It is difficult to judge the ethics of Evans' actions, but his work was to some extent motivated by the values and information available in his own time. On the other hand, he uncovered not only a vast architectural complex but also many objects that continue to be studied and to reveal information about the ancient Aegean civilization.

Conclusion

Sir Arthur Evans and his work at Knossos have been analyzed extensively by scholars over the past century, and nearly every person who discusses his life and work has a different opinion of the man. On the one hand, he published a multi-volume account of his findings at a time when such detailed analysis of a site was relatively unknown, and therefore helped to legitimize the profession of archaeology. Rather than proceeding in the haphazard ways that many of his contemporaries worked, Evans paid great attention to detail and recorded everything he uncovered and restored, writing a total of four volumes. He also genuinely sought to help people both in Bosnia and Crete. He also used his connections with the media to popularize Knossos, and he was one of the first people to make his findings open to the general public, thus creating great interest in his excavation.

However, at the same time he both created and appropriated an ancient culture for his own purposes, that is, to aid in establishing a predecessor for Western European culture. Evans both let his imagination run wild and helped fulfil the Western agenda by creating the image of a grand palace at the center of a great, peaceful kingdom, which he visualized in his “restitutions,” including the Throne Room, the many frescoes he interpreted and restored, and the snake goddess cult he created. Since Evans reconstructed the site nearly completely from rubble, it is hard to justify these actions. So then why did he create this modern image of an ancient society? Was he motivated by a strong belief in western supremacy, or by a desire to understand the past in a new and detailed way? Or perhaps the fame and notoriety he gained

from his work at Knossos was a motivator. I believe that all three of these purposes, particularly the first two, led Evans to Crete. Evans' motivations were complex and contradictory. He wanted both to help himself and his homeland as well as the people he encountered on his travels. At Knossos, Evans carried out forty years of permanent reconstructions on an ancient site in order to further his own agenda, which was part fanciful imagination, part hoping to help unify an embattled Crete, and part an attempt to advance the causes of his society.

The question I want to leave you with is this: is it possible to reconstruct the past, and if so, should it be done? To whom does antiquity belong? In light of all I have just discussed, it would seem that it is impossible to accurately recreate a time in which one did not live without imposing modern biases, no matter whether one is from England or Crete. The acceptance of Evans's faulty assumptions early on, including the very name Minoans, has been replaced by generations of scholars evaluating the vast collection of materials from the site and the cultural identity that the archaeological remains may reveal.

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